

FROM THE VALE OF HEALTH SOCIETY

Attention Kristina Smith - Planning Officer Camden Council

Planning application – 2016/5613/P

18.11.16

Dear Ms Smith

I am writing this letter in my capacity as Chair of the Vale of Health Society. I also endorse the contents of this letter as a resident of the Vale of Health.

The VOHS has looked at the above planning application including the statement dated 15.7.16 accompanying the request for pre-application advice and the letter from Conisbee, structural engineers, dated 13 July 2016. We have also seen letters of objections submitted by owners of neighbouring properties and the Heath and Hampstead Society.

Following a request to the architects for further information from Sue Charkhin, she was sent and we have seen, interim and further Soil Investigation Reports from Connaughts Site Investigation Ltd dated 1st June and 27 July 2016 respectively. There is no indication in the planning application statement that Camden were shown those reports or any additional reports relating to the implications of the findings therein. They were not disclosed as 'related documents' in the planning application. The reports are attached to this application and we believe are fundamental to the objections which we make.

We refer first to the letters of objection from neighbours dealing with the concerns arising from the replacement of the existing rear conservatory by a new extension with terrace above. They point out that the existing conservatory which tapers down towards the rear and sides is to be replaced by a square box which has a substantially greater volume than the conservatory and is more visually intrusive. They also point out that the terrace extension with high rails is visually intrusive and will affect their privacy. We do not wish to refer further in this letter to the detailed objections set out in their letters but endorse the concerns raised. We consider that both the extension and the terrace do not comply with para 4 of Camden's Planning Guidance.

The VOHS also has what are perhaps more fundamental concerns which arise from the geology of the site. Those concerns are also raised in the letters of objection written by Michael Nourse.

The writer passed Hillview one day this summer and spoke to someone on site about the work which was being carried out. She was told that when the floorboards in the front basement were taken up what appeared to be a river could be seen passing through the property a very few feet down. We believe it was probably a tributary of the Fleet.

We turn now to the site investigation reports and would highlight a few passages therefrom:-

"27/7/16 report

Para 3.0 FIELDWORK

The site investigation works comprised the excavation of six trial pits on the existing building and structures along with the drilling of two shallow hand augured boreholes to try to provide information on subsoil conditions below the foundations. In general, attempting to drill hand hand augured boreholes through the base of the foundations was problematical because of the moist/wet nature of the soils encountered and the suction formed which caused samples to be constantly pulled off the auger head meaning no progress was possible.

Para 9.0 COMMENTS

The geological survey map of the area suggested that the site was underlain by the Claygate Formation of the Eocene age. This is broadly consistent with the soil profile encountered on site which comprised an overlying layer of variable made ground over an organic alluvial clay. The Claygate Foundation (slightly sandy CLAY) was encountered below 3.00 m (WS1) and 3.90 m (WS2) and was then present to the close of the boreholes / probe holes at 8.00m. The presence of the alluvial clays to a depth of 3.00-3.90m is most likely associated with the lake present to the rear of the site.

Water levels were difficult to determine within the boreholes with collapse of borehole sides preventing readings being taken on completion of drilling in borehole 2. Within borehole 1 a steady inflow was encountered at 4.00m with the water level found to rise to 2.00m after 5 minutes and stand at 1.00 on completion of all site works

This would seem to indicate that groundwater is not present at shallow depths, although it should be noted that inflows were encountered within trial pit 7 and with a number of the previous trial pits drilled during the previous investigation works.”

The VOHS also refer to a Conisbee email to Sue Charkhin sent on 26/10/16 which said-

‘I can give you a bit of background. The initial measured laser survey of the house by our surveyors Greenhatch showed that there has been considerable movement - for example the floors are out of level by 14cm on the First Floor, which is more than is expected even in a Victorian London house. Conisbee commissioned Connaughts Site Investigations to dig trial holes around the site to try and establish the ground conditions and the depth of the foundations. They visited on 17th May and dug five trial pits.

Their feedback was that the ground was soft and appeared to be ”made ground”, possibly backfill when the road was created. Our subsequent historical investigations turned up evidence that the area under Hillview had once been used as “Grottoes” - presumably part of the pleasure grounds around the pond. This supports the evidence that the ground is back-filled.’

The VOHS notes that there has as yet been no disclosure as to how the ground conditions will be dealt with when proposed work is carried out.

Against this background we refer to para 12 of Camden’s standard planning applications form. Para 12 refers to Assessment of Flood Risk. We know from the City of London dams project that there are concerns as to flooding having regard to the underground streams on the

Heath. It seems to us that it cannot possibly be correct to assert, as the applicants do in para 12 that their proposal will not increase the flood risk elsewhere particularly as a result of the 'river' flow under Hillview and the general ground conditions. The works proposed including the new extension and roof works will result in an appreciably heavier structure. When underpinning work is undertaken, what is it suggested will happen to the waters flowing under Hillview, which presumably were historically part of the 'grottoes'.

We as laymen do not know the answers to these questions. However it seems to us as a minimum that the applicants should submit a flood risk assessment.

Furthermore there must be a risk that piling and associated works will inter alia cause vibrations which will affect the adjoining properties. We appreciate that normally underpinning works are dealt with at building regulation stage but consider that in a conservation area as sensitive as the Vale of Health professional evidence as to the risks to adjoining properties is essential at the planning stage.

We understand that Michael Nourse has already referred to the risks in his letter of objection.

Having regard to the forgoing we submit that the application should be refused.

Ellen Solomons

Chair Vale of Health Society.